

Richmond Dispatch

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THURSDAY, MAY 13, 1909.

THE MAYOR SHOULD VETO.

Mayor Richardson should veto the award for the electric light plant equipment and return the contract covering this matter to the Council for reconsideration and rehearing. This step will not delay the final completion of the whole work, nor need it postpone by a day the lighting of the city streets by city electricity. Before the machinery can be put in place and the water wheels and turbines set to work, foundations will have to be built and dams erected, no matter what company secures the contract for mechanical installation. No risk of loss to the city, therefore, is involved in the delay which such a rehearing would make necessary. On the other hand, it is a matter of the most serious moment to the city's future development that no suspicion of underhand dealing should attach to this latest extension of municipal activity.

The Water and Gas Works were built so long ago that those contracts are forgotten. Since their construction the reputation of America has suffered greatly by reason of the iniquities which have sprung up around contracts for city work. From this common failing Richmond has been singularly free, and it is worth more money for this city to preserve unimpaired its reputation for scrupulous fairness.

The whole question of the award for the contract for the city lighting plant to the General Electric Company at \$83,000 more than was bid by the Westinghouse Company apparently hinges upon the question whether or not the bidders were allowed to explain their bids before the full committee and to answer at that time the criticisms of Engineer Trafford. On the floor of the Council it was stated that the bidders were not allowed to be heard, and this charge was flatly denied. The clear fact seems to be, however, that the bidders did not know they could be heard, that nobody told them so, and to all intents and purposes they were as effectively muzzled as if that had been the original intention.

It may be that upon rehearing the Council, as well as the Committee on Lights, will be satisfied that Mr. Trafford was entirely correct in his opinion that the General Electric Company's bid offered the city more value even at the excess cost of over \$8,000. Or the Council may see fit to reconsider its action and accept another bid. As to which of these courses the Council will pursue we are not at all concerned. With all the demands now being made upon its resources the city of Richmond clearly cannot afford to sacrifice \$5,000 unless this expenditure is wise, but it is not the question of a few thousand dollars more or less that concerns us, and ultimately concerns the whole city. It is the question of whether or not this city shall start its electric light plant under a cloud of suspicion. If so, the contract may prove to be the beginning of the end of public confidence in municipal operation in this city.

MR. TAFT PUTS A WORD INTO DEED.

The President's selection of Henry Groves Connor to fill the vacant Federal Judgeship in North Carolina is a happy and hopeful thing. A broad-spirited act in itself, it is also rightly accepted as a sign and a pledge for the future. Both before and since his election, Mr. Taft has repeatedly indicated that he intended to revolutionize the old administrative regime in the South, and generally disinfest and chasten the discredited Republican machine. An opportunity to make good these promises confronted him in this judgeship, and he has embraced it gallantly.

The Raleigh News and Observer, a paper on the ground, and otherwise well qualified to know what it is talking about, thinks this "in many respects the most remarkable appointment by a Republican President since Mr. Harrison named Mr. Jackson, of Tennessee, Democrat, a Justice of the Supreme Court." Judge Connor will preside over the court of the Eastern District of North Carolina upon his merits. He is a man of high character and standing, of excellent parts and of wide legal experience both at the bar and on the bench. It might, of course, have been expected that a President with Mr. Taft's ideals about the bench would be likely to select a man of this sort for an important judgeship. But Mr. Taft's own party happened not to yield such a man, and Judge Connor happened to be a Democrat—not a weakly Democrat with an opportunist's proclivities toward the Republican program and obviously eager to be converted, but a good old-fashioned Democrat who has remembered his affiliations on past election days and is pretty sure to continue to do so in the future. The triumph of the President's choice is that it mounts an entirely above the party aspect of

the issue and awarded the honor to the man who was worthy of it.

It may be, as some will say, that this is a shrewd politics. In that it will, undoubtedly, give the administration a better name for wisdom, justice and dignity than it has hitherto enjoyed in North Carolina. But an improved reputation is the fair and proper reward for better conduct, and Mr. Taft is more than welcome to all the applause that he wins in this way. If he continues to prove the sincerity of his many pledges for a square deal in the South, no intelligent Southerner will grudge him the enhanced popularity of his administration.

THE HAINS VERDICT.

Thornton Hains was luckier than his unhappy brother. His trial came first, and it seems that he beguiled from the "unwritten law" plea all the immunity that a flushing panel of talesmen was willing to give him. Popular opinion was inclined to hold him more responsible for the killing of Annis than his brother. Yet the surprises of jury verdicts did not end with his trial. Acquittal on the ground of insanity or a disagreement had been confidently expected in the captain's case. But the jury elected to describe his act as manslaughter, a palpable compromise between sympathy and a desire to execute justice. Blackstone's definition differentiates manslaughter from murder in that the former does not proceed from "malice prepense or deliberate." We fear that an examination of the testimony would disclose little calculated to show that this killing involved no deliberation.

But some lenience on the part of these jurymen was natural enough, if not pardonable. If they gave the slayer the benefit of the doubt as to premeditation, they none the less registered a long step forward from the shameful weakness of other jurymen in similar cases. They have rejected the unwritten law with a clearness and emphasis which is decidedly refreshing. Because of the conspicuousness of this trial, their verdict may set a wholesome precedent. It may mark the beginning of a reaction whose end will be the final collapse of the "higher law" as a justification for murder. Meantime this jury has voiced the law's repugnance to private vengeance. As to Captain Hains assuming that he is responsible, he has little cause to complain, even though he comes out of this miserable mess less well off than his singularly fortunate brother. A term in prison is mild enough punishment for such a crime as his. On the other hand, if he is not responsible, his act avenged nothing and vindicated nothing.

A DISCOURAGING CAMPAIGN.

Judge Mann's stout opposition to the joint debate, on the ground that it results in bitterness and nothing else, can hardly be maintained after his speech at Buckingham Courthouse. There is no bitterness, or ill feeling or emphasis in personalities which a joint debate can create, which is not as surely created by such a speech as this. The fact that the rival candidate did not sit beside the judge, as he delivered it is a detail. This rival will read it; so will every reader of newspapers in the State; and it will as certainly and as properly provoke a reply in kind as though Mr. Tucker had shared the privileges of the Buckingham platform, with the opportunity to respond immediately. Thus will be inaugurated a long-distance joint debate no less dangerous to harmony, and rather less fair to the two participants than the swift give-and-take kind implied by the bodily presence of both. And thus the campaign, already unsatisfactory enough in all conscience, will drift more and more fully away from the inspiring and helpful thing that it should be.

A State primary contest offers a splendid opportunity to both candidates and people. To the people it offers the chance to become acquainted with the great problems confronting their State; and to estimate the candidates. To the candidates it offers the chance to analyze and suggest solutions for these great problems, and, fair in the open, to prove their worth to the people. A real leader, a great statesman, could desire no better door to office than that which the primary offers him. In the hands of such a one, the campaign becomes a vigorous, uplifting and enlightening thing. It becomes a time for self-revelation; for proving that the claim to preferment is built upon the rock of superior abilities to serve, for disclosing large breadth of view, marked capacities, far-sighted intelligence; for evincing a little greater familiarity with all the problems at hand than anybody else, and a little sounder idea of how these problems should be met; for producing the visible fruits of wise and mature thought; for showing those easily recognized qualities which mark the progressive and the builder; for making it plain, in short, that the aspirant asks for leadership because he knows himself to be better fitted to lead than his fellows. This is what a primary campaign should be in the hands of real statesmen. It is proving a very different thing just now in the hands of Judge Mann and Harry St. George Tucker.

To us it is singular that two gentlemen of such intelligence should continue to miss so completely the opportunities which stare them in the face. All about them are great, unsettled, difficult questions, vitally affecting the future of the State they aspire to lead, but they cannot see them. Of the garment of Virginia's manifold problems, they have hardly touched the hem. The so-called campaign has now been under way for almost three months; and they have made it three months of rattling and rattling again the dry bones of old issues, two of which were foregone in advance. In all this time scarcely a single constructive thought for the rebuilding of the State has

been originated by either of them. This condition was bad enough, but it appears that worse now awaits us. To use a fine thing like the primary for apathetic and fruitless reiteration was only to paralyze it; but to use the primary for billingsgate and embittered personalities is to degrade it. The worst enemies of the primary system may well be content when those who use it can see in it nothing better than a vehicle for assaults upon each other's character.

These gentlemen, it seems to us, quite fail to catch the spirit, the temper and the ambitions of the Virginia of to-day. It is energy sadly mispent for each of them to strive to show that his rival is a worse man than he is, for he can rest quite secure when he proves that he is a better man than his rival. Our people, on the threshold of a far fuller agricultural and industrial development than they have yet attained, are calling for leadership. They are calling loudly for a man whose clearer sight and broader abilities equip him to guide and drive the State's progress through four momentous years. This call is not an ominous years. This call is not answered by neat repartee or belittling "attacks." What one candidate did in 1898 or another in 1894 is far less important than what one of them can and will do in the years 1910-1914. Of the two candidates the State demands only proofs that they are leaders such as she looks for. We assure both of them that a real leader need have no concern whatever about his rival's "record." The people will recognize his voice soon enough when they hear it calling to them.

Dora Clay-Brook-Thomas has just gotten her third divorce. While Dora is only twenty-five, it must always be borne in mind that Lillian Russell has got a long start on her.

William J. Bryan is planning another trip around the world, but says that he will not do any hunting. Doubtless Mr. Bryan will do all his hunting after he comes back.

Where did the manslaughter come in exactly?

The cables from the firing-line state that Mr. Roosevelt has just killed an absolutely unknown creature. Well, if nature intended to introduce any new species, this was obviously the moment when she could absolutely rely upon the attention of the telegraph editor.

State Senator Hopkins is unable to reconnect with his seat. In fact, he has a standing grievance against the State of Illinois.

Some of our contemporaries seem to be evincing a disposition to define a Democrat as a man whom Mr. Aldrich can rely on at the pinch.

We hope to never live to see the day when they will be using oil-stoves on the bleachers.

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Borrowed Jingles.

SONG OF THE ULTIMATE CONSUMER.

There is beauty in protection that is high,
 There is grandeur in protection's very name,
 And to him whose will is active
 There is something that is most notable
 In the clever way protection plays the game.

Oh, the ultimate consumer
 Is a boomer and a boomer
 And a plunger for protection's little game.

Statistics have a splendor that is grim,
 And schedules have the power to appall;
 There is a fascination in the
 In the theory romantic
 Of prosperity behind a tariff wall.

Oh, we own an admiration
 For the tyrants of taxation,
 Slitting the life of Humphy Dumpty on the wall.

There is gammon in the promissory plank,
 There is buncombe in the protection bun;
 But the G. O. P.'s effective,
 It is competent, directive,
 With a certain trick of getting something done.

Oh, the G. O. P. may job us
 And the robber barons rob us,
 But we feel there's something doing when
 We're "done."

Now, the Democratic party is sublime,
 And we know that it would save us if it
 But throughout this wide dominion
 It's the general opinion
 That it never, never, never spills the wood.

Oh, the jabber, jabber, jabber,
 And the semperpari blabber,
 And the never, never, never of the wood!
 —Bert Leston Taylor, in New York Sun.

Just Say,
 "What do they mean by an impassioned appeal?"

"That's a complimentary term, applied
 To the losing lawyer's speech."
 —Pittsburgh Post.

The Druggist Explains.
 "I found a hair in my soda water."
 "I guess the boy was careless about
 shaving that ice."—Houston Chronicle.

Homeless.
 "Why does that man insist on hanging
 around the stove corner?"
 "He says he wants to get close to where
 there's something doing in the high explosive line."
 "Is he a scientist?"
 "No," says the hostess. "He's from Butte, Mont."—Washington Star.

In Danger.
 "Boatman: 'Oh, yes, the tide affects the
 water here at this point. I should say the
 water rises about a foot and a half.'"
 Passenger: "Then for the life of me, I
 must be out of here before she rises. Your
 blamed old boat is only about a foot out
 of water now!"—Life.

Different.
 "So you enjoyed my Hamlet," said Mr.
 Stormington Barnes.
 "Yes, I enjoyed the woman who tries to
 be complimentary."
 "I am glad of that. So many people
 nowadays do not enjoy it."—Chicago Daily News.

Also Ran.
 "Yes, sah," the Florida colonel said,
 "sometimes we have a Republican candidate
 for United States Senator. Last year Bill
 Trux was a candidate for Congress. No,
 he didn't attract many votes. The fact is,
 sah, that he only polled two. And now
 they are threatenin' to prosecute him
 for repeatin'."—Indianapolis News.

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